

Toileting

Toilet training can be challenging for children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Many children with ASD learn to use the toilet later than other children. There are many reasons why it can take a long time.

Each child with ASD is different. Children with ASD have some common problems that can make toileting hard. Knowing about these problems can help you come up with different ways to meet your child's needs.

Physical: There may be a physical or medical reason for toileting difficulties.

Language: Children with ASD have trouble understanding and using language. Do not expect a child with autism to ask to use the toilet.

Dressing: Some children with ASD have difficulty getting undressed and dressed during toileting

Fears: Some children with ASD are afraid of sitting on toilet seats or hearing toilets flush. Getting used to the toilet by using a visual schedule and making it part of the routine can make it less scary

Body cues: Some children with ASD may not be aware that they need to go or that their clothes are wet or soiled

Need for sameness (routine): Many children with ASD already have their own ways of urinating and having bowel movements. Learning new ways to toilet may be hard

Using different toilets: Some children with ASD learn a toileting routine at home or school, but a hard time going in other places such as public toilets

Where do I start?

Schedule training helps children learn toileting skills without placing other demands on them.

-Sit for 6 – Set a goal for 6 toilet sits per day. At first, trips will be short (as little as 5 seconds per trip) with one longer trip each day to work on bowel movements. Over time, increase the toilet sits to 10 minutes – using a visual timer can help support this. Allow your child to get up from the toilet immediately if they urinate or have a bowel movement.

-Don't Ask, Tell – Do not wait for your child to tell you they need to use the bathroom or to say 'yes' when asked if they need to go. Tell them it is time for the toilet.

-Schedule – Make toilet trips part of your everyday life. Plan toilet trips around your usual routine. Try to stick to the same times of the day.

-Communication – Use the same simple words, signs or pictures during each trip. This helps your child learn toileting language.

-Keep Trying – It can take 3 weeks to make a habit. Once you outline the routine and methods, keep working towards the same goal for 3 weeks.

-Make a Visual Schedule – Pictures may help your child know what to expect during toilet trips.

If your child does not understand pictures, you may show actual objects, e.g. toilet roll

-Identify Rewards – Think of rewards that are easiest to give your child as soon as they urinate or have a bowel movement.

THE KEY TO SUCCESS: Keep language simple and keep toileting routines the same

Tips to Increase Toileting Success

-Document your child's routine: Track how long it takes between when your child drinks and when they are wet. Checking your child's nappy frequently for wetness (every 15 minutes) will help you decide when the schedule toilet trips

-Consider your child's diet: Dietary changes, such as increasing fluids and fibre may help you child feel the urge to use the toilet

-Make small changes in daily habits: Dress your child in easy-to-remove clothing. Change your child as soon as they become wet or soiled. Change nappies in the bathroom.

-Have your child put the waste from the nappy in the toilet when possible: This will also help your child understand that waste goes in the toilet. Ensure your child flush the toilet and wash hands after each nappy change – building the toileting routine

-Make sure toilet trips are comfortable: Your child should be comfortable while sitting on the toilet. Use a toilet seat and provide a footstool. If your child will not sit on the toilet, work on sitting before beginning a toilet training program.

-Have many pairs of underwear ready: It is important children wear underwear during the day. They need to feel when they are wet.

-Use a visual schedule: Pictures showing each step of the routine may help your child know what will happen

-Use rewards: Give the reward immediately after they have urinated or have a bowel movement. The more quickly you reward the behaviour the more likely that behaviour will increase. Rewards used for toileting should *only* be used for toileting.

-Practise in different bathrooms: Using different bathrooms helps your child know they can use different toilets in different places.

Creating Your Child's Toileting Plan

Many different people may help your child with toileting, family members, teachers and Nursery staff. Everyone working with your child should use the same language and the same routine. This will help make toilet training a success.

-Goals: Let your child's helper know your goals. Outline what you are trying to achieve for this given period of time, e.g. 'For Jimmy to visit the toilet 15 minutes after the meal and sit on the toilet for 5 seconds'

-Routine: How often? Include how often or what time your child should visit the rest room. E.g. every hour on the hour or 15 minutes after drinking/meal.

For how long? Include how long your child is able to tolerate the toilet trips – it may start with only 5 seconds

-Language: Use words that work for you child. E.g. What words do you use to tell your child to go to the toilet? 'Time for wee wee'

-Places:

Where? Where does your child use the toilet (potty/room)

What? Think about sensory element – lights, noise, smell, toilet paper (touch)

Who? Who goes with your child to the toilet? Do they stay or wait nearby?

-Tools: Do you use visuals? Does your child listen to music or look at a book?

-Rewards: What earns a reward? How do you reward your child?

Visual Schedule

A visual schedule is a display of what is going to happen throughout the day or during an activity. A visual schedule is helpful during toilet trips to decrease anxiety and difficulties with transitions by clearly letting your child know when certain activities will occur.

-Decide the activities that you will put on the schedule.

-Put the visuals that stand for the activities on a portable schedule. The schedule should be available to your child from the beginning of the first activity. It should continue to be visible through all of the activities.

-When it is time for an activity on the schedule to occur, let your child know with a brief verbal instruction before the next activity begins. When that task is completed, give you child praise. Then refer to the schedule and label the next activity

-Provide praise and/or give rewards for following the schedule and completing the activities.



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